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DE RUEHLO #5533 2090817
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
P 280817Z JUL 06
FM AMEMBASSY LONDON
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7803
INFO RUEAUSA/DEPT OF HHS WASHDC

UNCLAS LONDON 005533

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STATE FOR OES/IHA NATALIA COMELLA, HHS FOR NIH AMY PATTERSON

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [TBIO](#) [UK](#)
SUBJECT: UK: POCS FOR NNSAB INTERNATIONAL COLLABORATION

REF: STATE 56179

¶1. Post has identified POCs within HMG and in the research community who are interested in engaging with the NSABB on the potential for the misuse of life sciences research and conveyed the points in reftel to the HMG. Within the HMG the Home Office is responsible for monitoring the possible misuse of scientific research. The POC within the HMG is Dr. Andy Bell, Chief Scientist in the Home Office's CBRN Section. He can be reached at (W) 44 (0)20 7035 6638, (F) 44 (0)87 0336 9117 or andy.bell23@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk. The POC in the academic community Post identified is David Carr of the Wellcome Trust. He has previously presented to the NSABB and remains interested in serving as a POC for the NSABB in the UK. His contact information is (W) 44 (0)20 7611 8220, (F) 44 (0)20 7611 8742, or d.carr@wellcome.ac.uk.

¶2. Dr. Bell related to ESToff the HMG is becoming more aware, domestically, of the potential threat of "dual use" research. Dr. Bell cited the recent piece of investigative journalism in The Guardian, a London newspaper, relating to the ease which pieces of DNA could be procured privately in the UK. According to The Guardian, the pieces of DNA could then be stitched back together, by a trained scientist, into small pox, polio or any other dangerous pathogen. Bell related this report had captured the attention of senior decision makers in the Home Office and he was in the process of preparing a report on the issue.

¶3. The research community in the UK is also well aware of the potential misuse of life sciences research. The UK's Medical Research Council (MRC) and Biotechnology and Biological Services Research Council (BBSRC) (both government funded research bodies) as well as the Wellcome Trust (a charity which provides considerable funding for health research) have issued policy statements on the potential for misuse of life sciences research. The MRC's statement, which is closely paralleled by the others, recognizes the danger but clearly emphasizes that danger must be balanced against the known benefits of encouraging research and the dissemination of scientific knowledge. If regulation of this research were to occur, the MRC argues, that regulation should be extremely targeted at those research projects with a "tangible cause for concern". It feels the number of such projects is very small.

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